The Programming Committee met on 12 November 2009 to consider document GN-2539, "IDB: Country strategy with Barbados (2009-2013)." During its presentation, Management recounted the main challenges facing the country, given the vulnerabilities that could compromise hard-won economic and social progress. Fiscal and external imbalances, in the midst of a global financial crisis and weaknesses in the business climate, coupled with high energy costs, are vulnerabilities that could be exacerbated by inadequate management of water and coastal resources, climate change, and gaps in education. In view of the foregoing, a productive dialogue with the country led to the establishment of four priority areas for the new strategy: coastal zone management and climate change adaptation; water and sanitation; energy; and education.

OVE indicated that, given the format of the new country strategies, which separated the strategy from the measurable objectives and programming indicators that would be coming in a future programming document, the strategy as presented was not "evaluable". Evaluability would only be feasible when the complete package, which included the strategy and the programming document, was available.

The Executive Directors expressed their approval of the strategy as presented, with the exception of the chair for the United States, which announced its abstention in the present format.

In general, Committee members expressed concern over the issue raised by OVE, since the process would not be complete without the programming document. This led to the suggestion that this approval be given maintaining the expectation that this conceptual separation of the strategy and programming and the time involved will actually ensure the evaluability and relevance of the complete package once it is presented by Management.

The Executive Directors noted the need to establish a Bank strategy for serving sophisticated middle-income countries like Barbados. They asked about the mechanisms and criteria used for prioritizing sectors and selecting instruments and how the dialogue with the country is reflected in the strategy paper. Several chairs questioned the relevance of including a debt sustainability analysis in strategy papers, and Directors inquired whether the indicative amount of Bank financing to Barbados included in the document was an allocation, a commitment from the Bank, or simply an approximation.

In my capacity as Chairperson of the Programming Committee, I hereby recommend that the Board of Executive Directors approve the IDB country strategy with Barbados, as described in document GN-2539.